



Telephone: 906-4923-31

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
NCB (SOUTH) TOWERS
2 OXFORD ROAD
KINGSTON 5
JAMAICA

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL

PRESS RELEASE

May 13, 2009

**Senate adopts Report of the Joint Select Committee on the Independent
Commission of Investigations Act 2009**

Plans for the establishment of a new body to investigate public complaints against members of the Security Forces and agents of the State took a significant step with the adoption by the Senate of the Report of the Joint Select Committee on the Independent Commission of Investigations Act, 2009.

The Bill was tabled in the Senate on May 30, 2008.

In her presentation to the Senate, Leader of Government Business in the Senate, Senator Dorothy Lightbourne praised the diligence and dedication of Committee members throughout the lengthy and vigorous deliberations, including the submissions from the human rights groups.

According to Minister Lightbourne the report is a major step towards the fulfilment of her administration's pledge to the Jamaican people.

“We must ensure that every suspicious death or any abuse at the hands of agents of the state is investigated without delay by Independent investigators, in whom the public can repose their confidence and trust”, Senator Lightbourne stated.

Senator Lightbourne outlined to the Senate several important features of the proposed Bill.

Chief among them are the creation of a Commission with an administrative structure specifically tailored to support the investigative functions of the body.

Island wide jurisdiction of the Commission to enable members to take action of incidents of the nature enacted by this legislation and conduct investigations.

In addition the body will have the ability to investigate not just matters that are the subject of a formal complaint, but also matters that, on its own initiative the Commission deems within its authority among other significant provisions.

There will also be provisions for holding the heads and responsible officers of relevant entities accountable for ensuring that reports of incidents are promptly submitted to the Commission for investigative action.

The Commission will also have an obligation to keep the public informed as to the status of investigations being conducted.

Another important provision is that the Commission will be empowered to assess the nature of cases and later apply the most appropriate method of investigation including controlling investigations which would ordinarily be carried out by the Security Forces.

The Commission will also determine which cases are appropriate for public or private hearings.

Senator Lightbourne argued that Public hearings will lend themselves more to community justice matters and will allow communities to have an opportunity to participate in the process.

“This is an approach that we feel will go a long way towards the healing process in communities that are hurting,” Senator Lightbourne added.

The Bill outlines serious penalties for non-compliance with provisions of the Act. found guilty of abusing citizens can be fined three million Jamaican dollars or imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years.

Senator Lightbourne told the Senate that the Report of the Committee includes a list of recommended amendments to the Bill, which arose from several useful suggestions from Committee members including civic action groups Jamaicans For Justice and Independent Jamaican Council for Human Rights.

“I am happy to say that the majority of those were taken on board by the Committee and these amendments are a testimony of that fact”, said Senator Lightbourne.

CONTACT

Rohan Powell

Ministry of Justice

Communication Specialist

564-5383/322-5890

908-5547

